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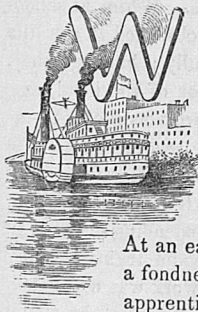


William Hart.

MASTERS OF ART AND
LITERATURE.

Eighth Article.

WILLIAM HART.



WILLIAM HART was born in Paisley, Scotland, in the year 1823. In the year 1831 his parents emigrated to this country, settling in Albany, New-York. At an early age he betrayed a fondness for colors, and was apprenticed to Messrs. Eaton & Gilbert, the celebrated coach-makers, of Troy, N. Y. His first efforts were upon the panels of the coaches, which he covered with his crude, though ingenious,

compositions of landscape or figures. Chancing upon Dunlap's "History of the Arts of Design in the United States," he read it eagerly, and became so excited with the idea of entering upon the artist's profession as to unfit him for the too mechanical labors of his "trade." A severe fit of sickness, at the age of 17—seeming at the time a great affliction—compelled him to give up his coach-making. He then fully determined to enter upon his artist's career. Had not that fit of sickness occurred, it now would have been "William Hart, Coach-maker," instead of "William Hart, N. A."

A living being the first thing necessary, the artist alternated between window shade decoration and his proper canvas, occasionally having a sitter for a five dollar portrait. His first studio was opened in a rude shed on Ida Hill, near Troy, where, besides considerable labor at his portraits, the studies upon his ever-dear landscape were not remitted. A portrait painter of

Troy, Mr. Moore, would have taken Mr. Hart as assistant, but the sturdy independence of the boy's father forbade the young artist to accept the position. He painted away with hopeful heart, though with scanty patronage, and at length determined to try his fortunes in the West. Going to Michigan, he there spent three years, having experiences of a peculiar and rather discouraging character, painting portraits and "boarding out" the pay for them. In this way he got along, passing through the acclimating process of fever and ague as one of his experiences, encountering rough life as another, but all the time studying at his more proper profession. Returning to Albany, he threw his whole strength into landscape painting, preferring to starve at the easel rather than longer prostitute his talent upon illy paid for portraits and shop-work. Recognition in appreciative quarters soon gave him encouragement. In Dr. Armsby, of Albany, the artist found a considerate and most generous patron and adviser. Through his kindness, Mr. Hart was enabled to revisit Scotland to recruit his now much impaired health. Spending several years in his native country, he returned invigorated in body and mind, and entered upon his labors with renewed vigor. A full portfolio of splendid sketches of foreign scenery, gave him plenty of congenial *matériel*.

His pictures were not long in winning attention from connoisseurs and the press. In 1848, his "Coming from the Mill" served to place him prominently before the public. Among other tributes was a very sweet poem from the pen of Miss Mary M. Chase, which quite "went the rounds." In this work are clearly detected the many excellences which have given the artist his individuality, viz.: depth of coloring, truthfulness to field study, softness of atmosphere, and grace in combination. His "Peace and Plenty," exhibited in the New-York Academy of Design in 1848, added to his reputation. A good critic said of it: "A picture so fine in sunlight, so poetic in treatment, so full of varied matter, viz.: a harvest field with home-bound load of grain and happy reapers—a distant village, sleepy in sunny happiness—the towering church—winding stream—distant mountains—the embowered foreground where an old soldier was fighting over his battles for the delight of the astonished children—a work so richly colored and complete in all its parts could not

but win for the artist the position of honor—an election as associate of the “National Academy of Design.”

“Lake Windermere” was another fine canvas which soon followed. It was characterized by many and striking excellences, and also won very favorable notice of the press.

His hands were now busy, and up to the present time have not ceased their tireless labors. No painter of the present day is more industrious, as a mere catalogue of his works would show.

Among them may be mentioned “The Little Spring” and “Up among the Hills,” exhibited in 1856. A leading paper said of them:—“The former illustrates one of Bryant’s sweetest poems. The artist has a fine feeling, a large sense of the beautiful and ideal in Nature,” and also added, “Mr. Hart’s sketches in the ante-room are not excelled by any in the gallery.” These sketches, and his exquisite small pictures, have become quite famous, and are now very eagerly sought for by connoisseurs, and by the public. The “View of the Esopus,” exhibited in 1857, was a great success. So also was the “Close of Day on Mt. Desert,” and “The Gloamin,” all of which served to give the painter position with the best landscapists in America. “The Gloamin” called forth a beautiful poem from William W. Fosdick. It has been this painter’s good fortune to win from the poets more tributes than any of his brothers, which fact shows that poetry and truth are combined on his canvas.

In the recently closed Academy Exhibition, Mr. Hart had ten pictures, distinguished for variety of subject and treatment, and for uniform artistic excellence. “The Lake in the Hills” and “Meadow Groves,” especially, attracted attention. No works in the Galleries won more pleasing remark.

At the last annual meeting of the Academy, Mr. Hart was elected Academician—an honor to which he was fully entitled.

A critic *au fait* in matters of art, and personally acquainted with the painter’s life and habits, writes to us as follows:—“Mr. Hart is a thorough artist, in practice, and in the worship of his heart of hearts—interested in everything from a wood-cut to a marble statue—a man unequalled in the *technique* of his profession—a first-rate critic, active in all measures to promote the interests of the ‘creative

calling.’ He is an enthusiast in Nature’s study—the basis of all true art-knowledge.” This is high praise, but worthily bestowed.

The artist’s intense study of nature is one secret of his successful reproductions. No Ruskinite better knows the forms and moods and *spirit* of field and wood, water and sky, interior and exterior life. For four or five months of each year he is “on the wing,” with sketch book, knapsack, and “traps,” venturing into all imaginable localities for a good scene—enduring any amount of fatigue for a desirable sketch. Visitors at his beautiful studio (on Tenth-street, Johnson’s Building), will be shown one of these highly characteristic studies. With a bark roof for a covering, the painter spent many days in the transfer in oil of a noble bevy of trees. There they stand, not in the stiff formality of body and limb and leaf, but, with the most laborious and wonderful detail, uniting all the grace and spirit of the life-like thing; dancing in sunlight and shade, many-hued, and wooing to admiration. It is one of the pleasing evidences of the artist’s devotion to Nature, and of his power in reproducing her in her poetry and beneficent life. A writer has truly said:—“There are many ludicrous as well as frequent serious incidents, with occasional dangerous episodes, which go to make up the true outdoor artist-life, and of which the world knows but little.” It is this kind of study alone which gives the painter the knowledge of color, proportion, combination, and perspective, that Nature reserves only for her devout worshippers.

Mr. Hart’s facile hand is equally at home with the crayon, with water-color, and oils, enabling him to perfect his work to the last detail. A crayon sketch and water-coloring, oftentimes preserve beauties otherwise lost to the studio. With the industry which is a distinguishing trait of his character, with his versatility yet half untapped, with enthusiasm unabated, with a patronage answering to his most liberal wishes, the artist bids fair to become one of the very few through whose instrumentality the American School of Art shall be elevated to a distinctiveness and pre-eminence commensurate with the freedom of our institutions and the nobility of our land.

It is to be hoped that his life of study of nature—his interpretation of the *poetry* of things, may find emulators among our younger and rising artists.

EDWARD S. BARTHOLOMEW.



HE recent decease of this celebrated young sculptor has called forth many expressions of regret and sympathy. By the death of Crawford, Bartholomew

became the recognized head of the American sculptors at Rome; and his unexpected death leaves a void in our art-representatives abroad not easy to fill. We purposed to prepare a sketch of the artist’s life and labors, accompanied by a portrait. The data for the sketch comes to us in a lecture on the dead sculptor, delivered by Hon. H. C. Deming, before the students of Yale College, on the evening of July 7th. So admirable is this tribute to the memory of Bartholomew, that we make free use of it. The portrait, we are sorry to say, could not be obtained in season for our present issue. We may present it in some future number.

The lecturer began by observing that the life of a true artist must be studied in his works, for his life is but an attempt to project his soul upon the canvas or into the marble or bronze with which he labors. Imagination was the despot of Bartholomew’s earliest years. The whole record of his life—his birth in the pleasant village of Colchester, in 1822—his serving an apprenticeship with a book-binder, and then spending four years at dentistry, after his removal to Hartford, to keep the machinery of life in motion, and his quitting both employments in disgust—are events only of interest as revealing the fact that in him there was a constant struggle between his aspirations and their environments. While at school in Colchester he was observed to use the chalk freely and skillfully; but his father, who had no appreciation of the ideal, uniformly said that Edward was a clever, industrious lad, until the reading of the life of Benevenuto Cellini, at Hartford, “put the devil in him.” After that he became moody and impulsive, spending his time in looking at old pictures and trying to copy them. His dentistry work was neglected, and the hopes of his father that he would lead a sober, industrious life in filing and filling teeth were disappointed. At Hartford he was first brought in contact with